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Creating a Successful Christian Marriage

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Creating a Successful Christian Marriage

Disciplines

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Publisher

Baker Book House

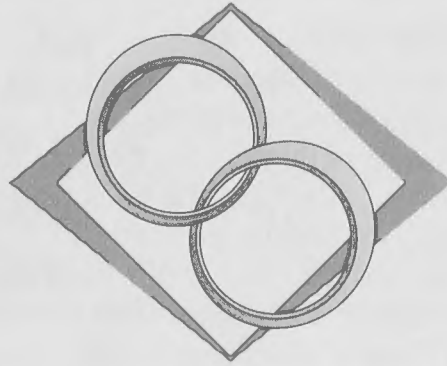
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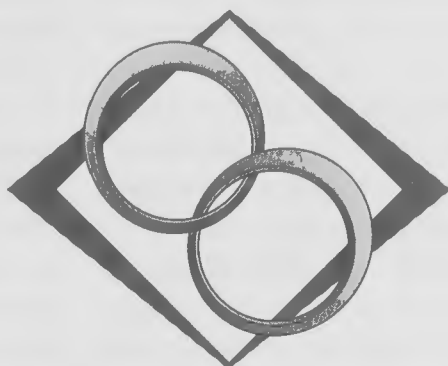
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Preface to the Fourth Edition

The challenge to revise a textbook that has been so well received has resulted in an expanded edition. In preparation for rewriting, we sent a questionnaire to sixty Christian institutions, asking them to rank subjects that should be included in a Christian text. More than forty instructors replied, and they included several hundred responses from their students. We cannot list all these individuals, but we thank them for their cooperation.

The replies from professors and students were tabulated separately. It was amazing how closely they agreed on what subjects should be included or omitted. They were not interested in such subjects as abortion, homosexuality, or date rape. Consequently, these areas are not treated at length.

However, they did indicate a desire for chapters in several areas not treated at length in the first edition, and so new chapters on "The Single-Parent Family" and "Communication" have been written. There was a desire for a chapter on "Intimacy." Parts of the previous chapter on "Adjustment in Marriage" have been included in the new chapter. Much interest was expressed in divorce and remarriage. Some of the original chapter on "Problems in the Christian Family" has been incorporated into a new chapter on "The Blended Family."

A unique feature of the text is a new chapter written by Philip McDonald on "International Living." As America becomes involved in a world economy, more young families will be living abroad in government, business, and missionary service. This chapter will help prepare them for their roles.

Philip, who has four preteen children, has also written an entirely new chapter on "Parenting."

Each of the remaining chapters has been revised, and some have been completely rewritten. The chapter title and paragraph headings may be the same, but every paragraph has been carefully considered and many rewritten. More than 90 percent of the sources cited are new, and have appeared since the first edition was published. The deciding criterion for

changing or omitting was always, "What will be most beneficial to a young person preparing for marriage?"

The new edition has been organized into seven sections, each of which treats one aspect of the family. Some of the chapters have been moved to reflect this new arrangement.

This text, like the first, is written from the functional viewpoint rather than the institutional. It is specifically designed to equip young people to make an intelligent choice of a mate, and to learn what to anticipate in marital interaction. Biblical principles from the original edition have been reiterated to encourage growth in Christian maturity and conduct.

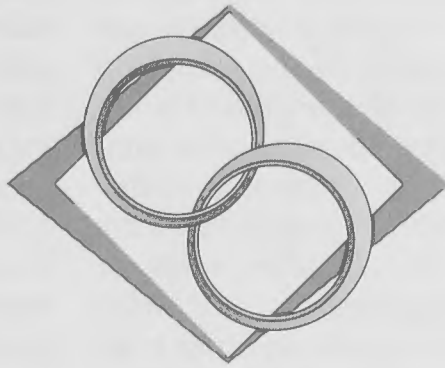
Sociological jargon has been avoided and some inclusive language used. Suggested readings for each chapter have been added to help the student who desires more information on the subject of that chapter. The "Personality Inventories" that students found so helpful are retained.

An instructor's manual including a test bank has been compiled. The additional items for

discussion will enable professors to broaden the students' knowledge.

Several professors who answered the questionnaire asked that the text remain "thoroughly biblical." We have attempted to keep and to strengthen this emphasis. However, we carefully point out that in several areas there is not agreement among Bible scholars on certain subjects. This is particularly true in reference to interpretations concerning the roles of men and women. After presenting opposing viewpoints, we have professed to what we believe in upholding the traditional family and its values.

The need for instruction in biblical principles of family living is greater than ever. The problems facing Christian young people and the Christian home have multiplied since the printing of the first edition. They seem to increase with each passing year. This volume is sent forth with the prayer that it will bring glory and honor to our Lord Jesus Christ. May he be pleased to use it in the formation and encouragement of Christian homes here and abroad.



Preface to the First Edition

Solomon said, "Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh." Although there are many books published today covering various phases of Christian courtship and marriage, and many Christian high schools, colleges, seminaries, and Bible institutes offer courses in this area, there is no textbook written specifically for such courses.

The author has studied the subject at the University of Pittsburgh and Ohio State University and has been teaching a course in Marriage and the Family for nineteen years in a Christian liberal arts college. He believes this volume will help fill this void in Christian literature that has existed so many years.

Those teaching in the field know there are two different ways of approaching a course on the family—the functional and the institutional. The functional course is primarily designed as a preparation-for-marriage course which attempts to give students some instruction in the process of mate selection, and of the interaction which takes place in marriage and family life. The institutional course treats the family from a sociological perspective and is concerned with the relationship of the family to other institutions of society.

This text is definitely written for the functional course in a Christian institution. Hopefully, it will enable students to make a wise choice of a mate and the adjustments needed to live happily together. Most any young person can learn to drive an automobile, but the insurance companies have discovered that a course in driver's education makes a better and safer driver. Similarly, any fellow or girl can date and get married, but it can be a much more enjoyable experience if they know something about the interaction that takes place. As one married student said to the writer, "I wish I had taken this course five years ago, for our marriage could have been so much happier if I had known these things when we began our married life."

There is a real need for more and better premarital counseling. Part of the problem has been the lack of a single volume covering the many areas

which the pastor wishes to treat in his limited time with an engaged couple. The pastor can now recommend the purchase and reading of this volume by the young couple prior to counseling sessions. He may even require the completion of the personality inventories to discover significant differences which can form the basis for some of the counseling sessions. A premarital counseling program based on the text should prepare the couple to enter marriage with a realistic view of what is involved in family living.

Another purpose in writing this book is to provide a comprehensive volume that will be a source of information to many pastors, Christian Education directors, and youth leaders who have not had the privilege of systematically studying these subjects in a classroom setting. Hopefully, these counselors will be better prepared to deal with questions concerning dating, courtship, and marriage after reading this volume.

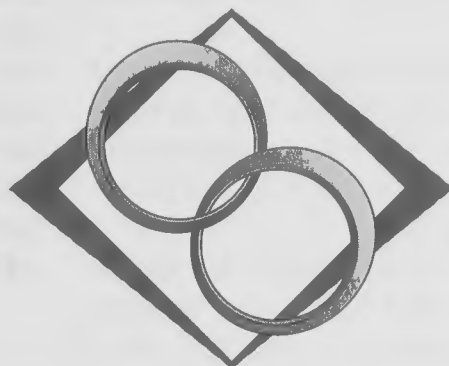
The sociological basis used in organizing the text is modern role theory. This theory is very compatible with the Bible, for Jesus said, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). Certainly young people must be aware of their own roles if they are going to interact with others. Many of the difficulties of courtship and marriage adjustment arise because the roles of male and female are no longer clearly defined in American culture. Also, very little education is given the youth of our society to help them successfully play the roles of lover, spouse, or parent. Someone has stated, "The only course in marriage and family living most young people ever get is the one they receive in their parental home." Unfortunately, many Christian young people do not receive very much help from their parents. On the other hand, much of the so-called sex education in public schools presents a negative view of family roles and values. Consequently, much of the learning in marriage and family living is through trial and error in an "on the job" setting, a factor which

helps to account for the high rate of marriage failure. This text emphasizes the necessity for individuals to know their spiritual, psychological, and emotional needs in order to fulfill role expectations, and to meet the various needs of those with whom they interact.

Another aim of this volume is to alert the young person to subtle cultural pressures that bear upon him. For example, Christian young people are not immune to the romantic love complex foisted on our culture by Hollywood and television. An attempt is made in these pages to counteract this by stressing the importance in courtship of seeking psychological compatibility rather than physical compatibility, since the major part of marital interaction is psychological rather than physical. It may be idealistic to think that most young people will choose their mates on the basis of psychological rather than physical compatibility, but even if only a few follow this suggestion their marriages will be happier. The author hopes no couple having studied this text will face each other after the honeymoon year is over and say, "Why did we ever marry each other?"

Another cultural influence of which Christian young people are often unaware is the pressure for social status conformity—the "keep up with the Joneses" syndrome of American life. This "status seeking," as Vance Packard terms it, is intertwined with the materialism that is seriously affecting Christian homes and churches today. Inasmuch as conflict over financial problems is a major cause of unhappiness in many homes, two chapters of this text are devoted to money management. If young people learn their roles as Christian stewards well, many of the financial situations that cause unhappiness can be avoided.

The author realizes that the first attempt to write a full-length textbook has its shortcomings, and he welcomes criticism and suggestions that will help to make any future edition more useful to its readers.



Acknowledgments

We are indebted to many people for their assistance in writing this book. My thanks to Dr. Clifford Johnson, now retired from his position as academic dean at Cedarville College, whose encouragement gave the initial impetus to write the first edition. Dr. James Jeremiah, president of Cedarville College at that time, arranged for a leave of absence during the winter quarter of 1971 to provide time to begin the actual writing.

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We are grateful to the librarians of the following colleges who permitted us to research and write in their libraries: Calvin College (Grand Rapids), Cedarville College (Cedarville, Ohio), Florida Southern College (Lakeland), Grand Rapids Baptist College, Southeastern Bible College (Lakeland, Florida), South Florida Community College (Avon Park), and Warner Southern College (Lake Wales, Florida).

A special word of thanks is due Mr. and Mrs. Ole Tilma, who so graciously gave us the use of their "missionary apartment" in May, 1992 in order to be close to the Grand Rapids libraries. We are also grateful to Dr. Irene Alyn, who in the summer of 1992 provided the use of her home near Cedarville College library. These dear friends saved thousands of miles of commuting that would have been necessary had we remained in Florida for that period.

A long list could be made of dear friends in various churches who prayed for us. Their part in the successful completion of the book has been recorded by the Lord of heaven and will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ.

I am especially thankful that my son, Philip, has agreed to become the co-author. He has excellent educational qualifications, and has had missionary service in Africa and Asia. These experiences have prepared him

Acknowledgments

to write about family living in a global economy.

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Last but not least, I am grateful for Helen Marie, my loving wife and typist, who became adept at reading my handwriting. She never

grew weary of typing and proofreading seemingly endless revisions. Her critical judgment and suggestions for changes resulted in a more readable volume. Her love and commitment have enabled me to experience a happy and successful Christian marriage. Our prayer is that thousands of students who study this book will also have this joyous experience.

Cleveland McDonald